

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTONTAXONOMIC STATUS OF THE SNOWSHOE
RABBIT, *LEPUS AMERICANUS SECLUSUS*
BAKER AND HANKINS

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In the year 1950, Baker and Hankins (Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, 63: 63, May 25) named and described a subspecies of snowshoe rabbit from the Bighorn Mountains, Wyoming. They named this subspecies *Lepus americanus seclusus* and mentioned its several diagnostic characters. The type is Univ. Kansas 20897, from 12 miles east and two miles north of Shell, 7,900 ft, Bighorn Mountains, Big Horn County, Wyoming.

Baker (J. Mamm., 40: 145, 1959) subsequently published the following: "Henry W. Setzer has kindly called my attention to the fact that *Lepus americanus seclusus* Baker and Hankins . . . is preoccupied by *Lepus timidus seclusus* Degerbøl, 1940. As a substitute, I propose *Lepus americanus setzeri*."

It is not surprising that Setzer considered Degerbøl's name a homonym of *seclusus* Baker and Hankins, although Degerbøl's name pertains to a "variety" or "forma." In North America variety has often been used interchangeably with the word subspecies. Degerbøl's "variety" definitely does not mean subspecies, for he expressly states that his population is not a subspecies but is probably instead a phenotypic variant for which the term variety is used (Zoology of the Faeros, Mammalia. Copenhagen, 1940).

According to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1964: 45), "infrasubspecific forms are excluded from the species-group and the provisions of this Code do not apply to them. . . . The original status of any name of a

taxon of lower rank than species is determined as . . . infrasubspecific, if the author, when originally establishing the name, either expressly referred the taxon to an infrasubspecific rank, or, after 1960, did not clearly state that it was a subspecies." Degerbøl expressly referred the taxon to an infrasubspecific rank, and the name combination *Lepus timidus seclusus* Degerbøl, 1940, is not covered by the provisions of the Code.

Article 17(9) of the Code states that a name is or remains available even though before 1961, it was proposed as a "variety" or "form." However, article 10(b) tells how and when an infrasubspecific name, such as *seclusus* Degerbøl, becomes available: "A name first established with infrasubspecific rank becomes available if the taxon in question is elevated to a rank of the species-group, and takes the date and authorship of its elevation." Degerbøl's name has not been so elevated, and if it were, although made available, unless elevated before the date of Baker and Hankin's name (1950) Degerbøl's name would be an invalid homonym.

Lepus americanus seclusus Baker and Hankins, 1950, therefore, is or was not preoccupied by Degerbøl's name, and remains the valid and available name for the relict population of *Lepus americanus* in the Bighorn Mountains. *Lepus americanus setzeri* is a junior synonym of *L. a. seclusus*. I thank Professor E. Raymond Hall, University of Kansas, and Professor Hobart M. Smith, University of Illinois, for advice and information.